

Date Marking for Food Service Operators Frequently Asked Questions

What is date marking?

Date marking is a food safety identification system for ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods refrigerated for more than 24 hours.

When does the date marking system apply?

Food prepared in a food establishment, or opened packages of food commercially prepared in a processing plant.

What is the goal of the date marking system?

To limit refrigeration time by ensuring these foods will be consumed, sold or discarded within 7 days.

Why is limiting refrigeration time important?

Reducing total refrigeration time limits growth opportunities for bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes*. This organism grows at refrigerated temperatures so monitoring and limiting refrigeration time reduces risk of bacterial growth to dangerous levels that can cause foodborne illness.

What are the requirements for foods prepared in your establishment?

- Label foods made in advance with the date and time of preparation
- Label foods with 7 day "Use By" date—the preparation date counts as day 1
- Maintain foods at 41° F or less

What are the requirements for pre-packaged commercially prepared foods?

- Label with 7 day "Use By" date - the container opening date counts as day 1
- Maintain foods at 41° F or less

What if I mix the food with something else?

When foods are mixed together the 7 day "Use-By" date is based upon the preparation date of the earliest prepared food.

What if I freeze the food?

Freezing stops the date marking clock but does not reset it.

- Note prep, freeze, thaw and 'Use-By' dates on date marking label
- Date marking label must indicate the total number of refrigeration days used

What if a deli item is pre-packaged for sale out of a self-service case?

The 7 day date marking requirements apply.

Are there exceptions?

YES. See reverse side for details.

Exceptions

- Individual meal portions served or repackaged per customer order from a bulk container.
- Commercially prepared deli salads (i.e ham, egg, pasta, potato and macaroni salads), mayonnaise and other acidified dressings (i.e. thousand island).
- Certain Hard cheeses - see list.
- Certain Semi Soft Cheeses - see list.
- Cultured dairy products such as yogurt, sour cream and buttermilk.
- Preserved fish products such as pickled herring, dried or salted cod.
- Shelf-stable dry fermented sausages, pepperoni and salami which retain the original casing on the product and not labeled "keep refrigerated".
- Shelf-stable salt-cured products such as prosciutto and Parma (ham) not labeled "keep refrigerated".

Examples of Hard and Semi-soft Cheeses Exempt from Date Marking			
Examples of hard cheeses containing not more than 39% moisture (21 CFR 133.150)		Examples of semi-soft cheeses containing more than 39%, but not more than 50% moisture (21 CFR 133.187)	
Asadero	Lapland	Asiago soft	Oka
Abertam	Lorraine	Battelmatt	Port du Salut
Appenzeller	Oaxaca	Bellelay (blue veined)	Provolone
Asiago (medium or old)	Parmesan	Blue	Quesa de Bola
Bra	Pecorino	Brick	Queso de la Tierra
Cheddar	Queso Anejo	Camosum	Robbiole
Christalinna	Queso Chihuahua	Chantelle	Roquefort (blue veined)
Colby	Queso de Prensa	Edam	Samsoe
Cotija Anejo	Reggiano	Fontina	Tilsiter
Cotija	Romanello	Gorgonzola (blue veined)	Trappist
Coon	Romano	Gouda	
Derby	Sapsago	Havarti	
Emmentaler	Sassenage (blue veined)	Konigskase	
English Dairy	Stilton (blue veined)	Limburger	
Gex (blue veined)	Swiss	Milano	
Gloucester	Tigard (blue veined)	Manchego	
Gjetost	Vize	Monterey	
Gruyere	Wensleydale (blue veined)	Muenster	
Herve			